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ABSTRACT

Intended to facilitate dialogue between concerned parents and school administrators and teachers, this booklet explores issues of intellectual freedom in elementary and secondary school education. Following an introduction outlining the conditions necessary for a productive exchange between parents and the schools, the booklet discusses the following topics: (1) the necessity for intellectual freedom in the schools, (2) how selection processes differ from censorship, (3) how censorship attacks good books, (4) censorship and organizations, (5) why censorship is increasing, (6) the rights of teachers in schools, (7) the effects of good and bad books, and (8) procedures for dealing with complaints. A selected bibliography of materials on censorship and intellectual freedom concludes the booklet. (HTH)

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1 Introduction

Provoked by stories in the mass media about problems in the public schools and perplexed by changes in the curriculum, more and more parents are expressing concern about the education of the young. As parental interest in the schools increases, tension between concerned parents and their children's teachers rises, frequently resulting in frustrating confrontations through which little—if anything—is settled. Nevertheless, tension can lead to intelligent exchanges between parents and teachers, to mutual understanding, and even to improving instruction. But productive exchanges between parents, teachers, and administrators depend to a great extent on the presence of certain conditions that foster mutual understanding. Among others, the following conditions seem essential:

1. Teachers and administrators should recognize and respect parents' rights to express concern about the education of their children, including concern about the assignment of books and activities.
2. Teachers, parents, and administrators should be willing to discuss—not simply argue about—differing points of view regarding education.
3. Teachers, parents, and administrators should recognize that the essential reason for the existence of the public schools is the students' right to know and to become educated citizens.
4. The students' right to know provides the basis for the teacher's right to teach. The students' right to learn is, therefore, the basic right, basic in the sense that the United States has made every attempt to provide a student with the right to a good education. Although it is a derived right, the teacher's right to teach is a necessary one if the student is to learn. Both rights—the students' right to know and the teacher's right to teach—must be safeguarded if the goal of education in this nation is to prepare the student to live in, and contribute to, a democracy.

5. The students' right to learn does not, however, preclude a parent from expressing concern—or even alarm—about a specific assignment or book. A parent has the right to request an alternate assignment, and a teacher must be prepared to make it.
6. Parents must understand that their right to be concerned about a book their child is reading does not give them the right to control the reading of all children in a school.
7. School systems must prepare, and make available to all persons interested in education, the following: a materials selection policy, a statement of philosophy about education in general and specific disciplines in particular, and a set of procedures for dealing with parental complaints.
8. Before parents protest materials used in the schools, they should read the materials in their entirety and should ask why the materials are being used. Parents should also become acquainted with the prevailing philosophy of education in the local school system.
9. Parents who protest teaching materials on religious grounds should become acquainted with constitutional arguments on the separation of church and state.

2 The Necessity for Intellectual Freedom in the Schools

Intellectual freedom is a general term that refers to the right of the inquiring mind to seek for information, the right of the curious mind to satisfy its curiosity. Academic freedom is a more limited term, referring to the intellectual freedom within the school, particularly to the right of teachers to teach and carry out research within the area of their assigned subject. In the past, academic freedom has been thought of primarily in connection with colleges and universities, but it has become clear in recent decades that academic freedom is essential at all levels of instruction.

Academic freedom is not a primary right; the primary right is the students' right to learn. Academic freedom must be related to the purposes of instruction at each of the various grade levels. But within the limits of instructional purposes and the level of understanding of the students, intellectual freedom is necessary for excellence of instruction. If the ultimate end of a democratic educational system is to prepare self-reliant, self-directed adults who are able to decide for themselves how to conduct their lives, then the school sytem must encourage self-reliance and independence from the very first years of education.

As the marketplace of ideas, the function of the school is to teach students how to think, "how to distinguish between valid and invalid ideas. You simply cannot teach people to distinguish between two opposing points of view if one point of view is completely and systematically excluded from the schoolhouse."[1]

One reason why intellectual freedom is necessary grows out of the diversity of the multicultural society of the United States. Slightly less than half of our citizens come from an original English-speaking background. The other half come from perhaps fifty different language or ethnic groups. There is a similar diversity in the religious composition of this society. While a majority of our citizens belong to one of the three major religious groups, significant numbers of people belong to other religions, or call themselves atheist or agnostic.

Intellectual freedom permits attention to the controversial issues that divide the nation, even in communities where a single point of view is dominant, though in the classroom neutrality is required concerning these issues. Accurate historical and scientific information may be presented, but in such a way that frees students to retain their own loyalties and to decide for themselves about these controversial matters.

Though the schools are neutral on religious or political questions, they are not therefore hostile toward religion or the traditional moral values that religions uphold. Education in the western world started in churches and synagogues and became secular, that is, "in the world" or "outside of the church," when it became evident that the specialized function of teaching could be carried on in the larger community in a nondenominational way. But in leaving the church building and moving out into the community, the schools did not leave behind them the values that caused education to begin in the churches. Two of the values that are consistent with the religious heritage are a recognition of the essential importance of every individual student and a deep commitment to truth.

The recognition of the value of every individual student has caused a continuing growth in the availability of educational opportunity for all students in the country. In 1900, about 10 percent of students were in high school. Today, from 70 to 80 percent of students are in high school. We have made continuing efforts to provide educational opportunity for students of every ethnic background and of every level of physical or mental ability. This application of the belief in the equal value of every person is part of our religious heritage and continues to influence attitudes and practices in the schools. Few other countries in the world have attempted to educate all their young people, as the United States has.

A second value in the schools, a deep commitment to truth, has created a variety of problems. One problem is the disagreement both within and without the schools about what is true. In general, the schools have attempted to deal with this problem by allowing a variety of points of view to be held and disseminated. One of the characteristics of intellectual freedom is the encouragement of free debate, from which it is hoped the most truthful answer will emerge.

Because the schools allow several points of view to be held, some critics of the schools charge contemporary education with advocating a form of relativism. Relativism is thought to be bad,

because it denies a single absolute truth, often the particular truth which the critics accept, and which they wish the schools to advocate.

The willingness of most educational institutions to accept differences of opinion does not imply that these institutions deny that final truths may ultimately be found. It recognizes that in a diverse and multicultural society, public institutions paid for by the taxes of all citizens must remain neutral with regard to doctrinal or partisan dispute. Moreover, there is also a commitment to the belief that truth arises from freely held ideas that win acceptance in the free marketplace of opinion.

The schools' commitment to the presentation of a variety of points of view may cause tension in a community dominated by a single ethnic group or single political party or single religion. Such a community may believe it has the right to control the public schools by its own doctrines or beliefs. It might claim support from the 1973 Supreme Court decision which called for the use of community standards in determining obscenity. But this is a misinterpretation. The Court did not say that community standards could be used to determine curricular content or to select learning materials for the schools. Though the charge of obscenity is frequently made by critics of the schools, it is doubtful if any courts have in fact held that any books used in the public schools are obscene.

Moreover, the schools are preparing students for life in the United States, not in some single community. Almost all standards of education are national. Admission to college, standardized tests, bodies of knowledge that are developed by scholars—all of these are national in scope and cannot be limited to the frame of reference of some single community in the United States. One of the important symbols of the national commitment of the schools is the pledge of allegiance, which is so often used, with its reminder that this is one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for *all.*

Disciplines and Individuality

The intellectual freedom that is essential for excellence of learning grows out of the various disciplines taught in the schools. Disciplines, or the organized principles of a body of knowledge, such as history, or chemistry, or the study of language and literature, provide regulation for the practices of the teacher. One of

the protections for the student lies in the discipline provided by the principles of the various professional groups. Human tendency to error or to partiality is checked by the various provisions of each discipline. The methods of teaching reading or writing developed by disciplinary procedures are likely to reflect the efforts of several people to refine and improve the methods in use. This group process and the principles that the group generates are an important part of the disciplinary process.

Such group procedures should be a living part of the educational institution. The curriculum for the various subjects and grades should be developed by committees. The committees should have representatives from the teaching staff, the administration, the board of education, and a representative of the parents of the community. Such a group would provide the checks and balances that make the final decision representative of the various constituencies involved.

On the other hand, though it may seem paradoxical, each individual teacher must have sufficient freedom to adjust the curricular materials and guidelines to his or her own preparation and particular classes. Teaching is not a production line process with every teacher doing the same thing every hour of the day. Both of these elements, the regulatory practices of the groups involved in the discipline and in the local school and the unique individuality of the particular teacher, are essential elements of intellectual freedom and need to be balanced in actual practice by the teacher and the school.

It is a well established principle that the truth cannot be forced. If students are to learn, there must be freedom from fear of ridicule or constraint. Teachers must be free to express their own judgments; students must be free to express their own individuality. The American school system has not yet achieved a situation in which the classroom is free from fear. If teachers are threatened with dismissal even for using materials selected by representative committees as described above, there is very likely to be fear in the classroom. Learning may also suffer if teachers use their superior status in the classroom to ridicule students who disagree with them.

Administrators should select teachers who are tolerant of dissent in the classroom and should deal with teachers in ways consistent with the spirit of the Constitution. Teachers in recent years have been dismissed or threatened with dismissal for the selection of controversial teaching materials in such states as Penn-

sylvania, Indiana, Wisconsin, Idaho, and others. These threats have sometimes come, to the surprise of the teachers involved, when they have used books of established literary value, such as *The Catcher in the Rye, Huckleberry Finn,* or *The Scarlet Letter.* Sometimes teachers have found themselves in trouble over less well-established, more ephemeral materials that have the ability to arouse student interest in reading, such as *Love Story, Hawaii,* or *The Magician.* One teacher in Minnesota, who was subjected to community pressure and a school board reprimand over the use of the poem "A Coney Island of the Mind Number Five," left the teaching profession at the end of her first year. It is not surprising that fear exists among teachers, under these circumstances.

Parents should recognize that the threat of dismissal is likely to produce poor teaching, teaching that is unimaginative, limited, and probably quite restrictive of the curiosity and imagination of students.

Professional Standards for Selecting Materials

Teachers and librarians prepare for their careers by learning professional methods of dealing with books. Just as doctors and dentists are required to deal with patients and methods of curing them in accordance with professional standards, so are teachers and librarians taught to use professional standards.

Professional standards for dealing with books are based on the traditional body of literature in English and assume a familiarity with the literature from Chaucer through Shakespeare and Milton to the great writers of the twentieth century. Along with the literature is a tradition of literary criticism explaining and evaluating the literature. The principles of literary criticism ideally become the operative tools of professional workers with books. Their judgments concerning the new books of each year and the relative worth of older books are recorded in the standard reference works and literary journals.

Though a group of professionally trained people may well disagree on the merits of a given book, a working consensus can be obtained, subject to continued debate in the forum provided by various professional journals or conferences. This is, it should be noted, a public process, open to all with its records available in the libraries of the country. As a public process, it can be joined by all interested persons who will familiarize themselves with the rules of the game. Professional standards are available to all

citizens and are used to greater or lesser degrees in newspapers and magazine book reviewing and in the theater as well as in the classroom.

In addition, professional standards are increasingly accepted in the courts of law. One of the basic working principles of teachers and librarians is that a book or film cannot be judged on a single aspect or episode, but must be judged as a whole, in the light of the intention of the complete work. This principle was affirmed as long ago as 1913 by Judge Learned Hand for his decision in the case of *The United States* v. *Mitchell Kennerley and Hagar Revelly.*[2] In 1933, Judge John Woolsey applied the same principle in the case concerning James Joyce's *Ulysses.*[3] The principle has appeared since in decisions by Judge Augustus N. Hand,[4] Judge Curtis Bok,[5] and in 1973 in a decision of the Supreme Court written by Chief Justice Warren Burger.[6]

Another professional principle that is widely accepted both by teachers and librarians and the general public is the need to expose the student to a wide range of ideas. In practice this means that there must be freedom for the teacher to select the most relevant materials for the assigned goals of instruction, and there must be freedom for the student to examine and think about those materials. The students' right to learn requires the right for the students to be mistaken and the right to examine materials that the teacher or parent may regard as mistaken, such as nineteenth-century defenses of slavery in the United States or descriptions of ways of life deemed contradictory to democracy, such as *The Communist Manifesto.*

Relatively few people believe that a book should be censored because of the ideas in the book. The American Library Association School Library Bill of Rights is very clear in its insistence that school libraries provide "material on opposing sides of controversial issues." The insistence that libraries provide books and magazines that represent the complete gamut of opinions on all subjects of interest to human beings is widely, though not unanimously, accepted in our culture, and is a basic element in the tradition of intellectual freedom in our school systems. This principle too will no doubt continue to provoke tension between the schools and those segments of the community who wish to restrict education to the prevailing orthodoxies of a given community. A school board member illustrated this desire to restrict education by defending the removal of the ephemeral book, *Saturday Night Fever,* from the library of Loyal, Wisconsin, public schools on the

grounds that the book is obscene and that the book's description of life in a poor Italian section of New York does not "pertain to our style of life at all."

Another important professional standard for dealing with books, films, or other learning materials is a recognition that good works may include substandard or even objectionable language. One of the best illustrations of this is the Bible, which ranks among the greatest works of literature of the western world. The biblical writers did not hesitate to refer to the sinful aspects of human nature in frank and realistic fashion. That frankness does not, however, detract from the greatness of the Bible.

There is much literature of more recent origin that also describes human nature in frank and realistic fashion, such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, or *The Catcher in the Rye*. The value of these books is not diminished by the depiction of objectionable behavior by the characters in the books. We have been taught, by reading the Bible, to read about sinful actions and note the sad consequences of such actions. Most readers find no trouble in observing that the more recent books reporting wrong or tragic human activity also report the sad consequences of such activity. As Justice Warren Burger suggested in 1973, the ultimate worth of a book does not depend on the absence of objectionable language or objectionable behavior.

Often a concern for words used in literature grows out of a deeply held principle. Those persons who work for equality of life for minority group members or for equal rights for women sometimes object to words that seem to imply opposition to equality of treatment for all persons. Thus, books or films with racist words may be objected to, such as *Huckleberry Finn* or *The Merchant of Venice*. There may also be objections to publications that use such words as "chairman," "fireman," or "policeman," because they imply a traditional role for men and women.

More traditional critics may object to books such as *Our Bodies Our Selves* or to the magazine *Ms.* because they object to an equalitarian concept of the role of women. The principles of intellectual freedom presented here suggest that the diversity of our society should be recognized by using school materials that present both the traditional and the equalitarian view of women's role in this society.

Sometimes a hidden agenda lies behind objections to books. The objectors may complain about the language of such books as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *1984*, or *Brave New World* because there is

social acceptance for objection to language. But frequently, the real objection may be to the ideas expressed in the books.

There may be a similar hidden agenda lying behind the frequency of objection to books that deal with minority group persons in the United States. The following books are among the most frequently objected to and all present aspects of minority life:

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (an American Indian is presented heroically)
Black Like Me (Black life)
To Kill a Mockingbird (Black life)
Hawaii (Asiatic life)
Diary of a Young Girl (Jewish life)
Down These Mean Streets (Puerto Rican life)
Laughing Boy (American Indian life)

A number of other examples may be seen in the NCTE volume *Dealing with Censorship.*[7]

Teachers, librarians, administrators, and directors of educational institutions need to make a continuing effort to win public understanding of the principles suggested above. This is a long term task; there is reason to believe that the great majority of American citizens would be receptive to the arguments suggested above, but unless effort is made to bring these arguments to their attention, the schools will continue to experience increasingly severe pressures.

3 How Selection Processes Differ from Censorship

A common theme in discussions of controversial books is that all teachers and librarians are censors, and there is therefore no real difference between censorship and selection. It is true that funds are limited by which any agency buys books, and a single lifetime is too short to read all the books in print, so that some books and magazines will be chosen and others omitted. But professional methods of choosing the material for school or library differ significantly from the methods used by censors.

First, censors are primarily negative in their approach to learning resources. They wish to prevent the dissemination of particular information, as is noted in section 6 of this report, or they wish to prevent the circulation of particular books or films, as noted in *Dealing with Censorship.* Edwin Castagna defined censorship as "... any action by officials of government, church, or other organizations, or by private individuals, which, by legal actions, coercion, threat, or persuasion, prevents expression or communication."[8] Moreover, censors wish to make their action permanent. That is why book burning is so powerful a symbol of censorship; a burned book is permanently destroyed. Book burning also illustrates the profoundly negative nature of censorship. Book burning has actually occurred in the U.S.: *Slaughterhouse-Five* was burned at Drake, North Dakota, in 1974; *Of Mice and Men* at Oil City, Pennsylvania, August 1977; and *Values Clarification* at Warsaw, Indiana, December 1977. Copies of *The Living Bible* were burned in May, 1981 at Gastonia, North Carolina, along with other materials.

In contrast to censorship, book selection is positive in its approach to learning resources. Librarians, acting professionally, choose from available books for the purpose of having the books read; they do not single out some title in an effort to prevent it from being read. They act, in short, in positive ways, not in negative ways.

Moreover, the librarian does not attempt to impose on readers a single standard of literary excellence or of scientific correctness, or of good taste in language. Librarians attempt to choose books

that will meet the whole range of reading interests and needs. For example, a teacher in a junior-senior English novel class chose the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* with its heroic lawyer and also chose *The Magician*, which presents a corrupt lawyer. Both novels offer realistic pictures of our society and contrast the difference between integrity and the lack of integrity in professional life. Both books use contemporary language and vividly concrete detail. They are attractive books to young adults and well suited to the purpose for which they were chosen. Both books have been attacked by critics who apparently paid little or no attention to the relationship of these books to their educational purposes. In all probability one of the best defenses of an allegedly controversial work is that it was chosen as an appropriate resource for an important goal of instruction.

Second, censorship is contrary to the practices of our democratic society. It is a kind of vigilantism, an attempt to bypass the normal procedures of our society for the establishment of the curriculum and the selection of learning materials. The constitutions and legislatures of the various states determine the procedures and policies for selection of the state superintendent of instruction, the election of the school board, and guidelines for the curriculum. The citizens, by constitutional procedures, choose the members of the state legislature and the school board, and delegate to these officials the authority to control the curriculum and the book selection processes. But the censors frequently wish to bypass these procedures, and use pressure group tactics to eliminate the books or courses they object to.

Not only is the process undemocratic, the intent seems undemocratic, since its purpose is to withhold information from the student. When access to information is restricted, it is less possible for informed citizens to make proper choices. If citizens do not have accurate information about the status of minority group persons, as described in such books as *Black Like Me* or *Down These Mean Streets*, how can they make reasonable decisions when they vote? The censors have recently attempted to withhold information about migrants (as in *The Grapes of Wrath*), information about drugs, about human reproduction, about theories of evolution, about sociology and anthropology, and about views of American history that the censors regard as unorthodox. This effort to withhold information is undemocratic since it prevents students from becoming fully informed members of this society, able to decide for themselves how to vote, and what is right. The ultimate purpose of withholding information is to limit the freedom of choice of the reader or student by controlling access to information.

There is a tendency among censors to conceal the fact that they are withholding information. Books were removed from the library at Island Trees, New York, after the librarian had left the school for the day.

In contrast to the secrecy with which censors frequently act is the public method by which professional persons evaluate and publicize their evaluations of literature in the selection aids and professional journals of the various disciplines of learning. Openness in action is an important characteristic of our democratic republic. The Sunshine laws passed in most states ensure that committees that prepare the curriculum and select materials follow open and public methods of action.

Third, the censor acts in nonprofessional ways. Censors do not consider the value or meaning of the work as a whole; they make arbitrary decisions about the book based on some single aspect of the book—its language, for example, or a single episode, as in the recent case of the book *Foster Child*, by Marian Bauer, which was attacked because it describes, with decorous concreteness of detail, the sexual abuse of a foster child by a foster father. Professional reviews of this book spoke highly of the book's presentation of the life of a foster child in today's world.

The censors may attack a book because of the associations or life of the author. *The Grapes of Wrath* has been attacked on the false grounds that Steinbeck was a communist. The censors have ignored the great weight of scholarly opinions about the value of this book. Censors often have not read the entire book, but concentrate on some feature they regard as objectionable. Reviews are now being distributed nationally that list specific pages censors find objectionable, thus making it possible to object to the book without examining it as a whole.

In contrast to these nonprofessional ways of dealing with books is the effort of the librarian or teacher to apply the principles of book selection that are part of their professional training.

Fourth, there is a certain irrationality in some censorship activity. Some censors seem to think that use of a taboo word, or the reference to an unpleasant or tragic aspect of life, will automatically produce it in reality. As in the folk tale the phrase "Open sesame" caused a wall to open on a great treasure, some persons think that to say "flat tire," or "cancer," "tuberculosis," or "syphilis" will produce those repellent aspects of life. In fact, saying those words doesn't produce the reality, nor does avoiding such words protect us from those unpleasant realities. The English speaking world found the word "graveyard" very unpleasant; it substituted the word "cemetery," but the experience of taking a

loved one to the cemetery is just as heartbreaking as taking a loved one to a graveyard. And, tragically, adopting the contemporary euphemism "Memorial Park" does not offer the heart much balm.

Moreover, the irrational comparison of reading with eating (analyzed in section 8, below) sheds little light on the reading process. Readers do not have an empty mind into which ideas are poured, as food is poured into an empty stomach. The response produced by literature on a reader is complex and depends greatly on the attitudes and values brought to the work by the reader as well as upon the setting and educational use made of the work. Because of the variability of response to a literary work, works of limited value may be educationally useful, while works of the greatest literary value, such as the Bible, may have tragic effects, as in the case of those persons who hand serpents around in church to test their faith, as suggested in Mark 16:18.

Finally, some censorship is caused by fear. Margaret Fiske pointed this out in her study of censorship in California. In a world where teachers are dismissed for using some of the greatest literature of the twentieth century, such fear is understandable. On the whole, however, contrary to the image of the teacher or librarian as a timid, self-deprecatory person, it is quite clear from the studies of the actual holdings of school libraries, that many librarians and teachers select the best of books without fear of would-be censors. And in most schools, those selections are upheld by the administration and the school board.

Julia T. Bradley, a lawyer, wrote a detailed analysis of the differences between censorship and selection and concluded:

> Despite school board protestations to the contrary, censorship and selection are distinguishable. Censorship is an act whereby one group imposes its value judgment upon another and permanently limits access to certain resources. Selection, on the other hand, is a process; the only inherent constraint upon choosing among all published materials is that of budget. Where censorship occurs, decisions are absolute; a book is unsuitable. In the selection process, choices are relative; is this book more useful, for varied reasons, than another? Moreover, where censorship occurs, one group permanently terminates another's right to judge a book for itself. Where selection operates without restraints, a book which readers consider 'bad' will die of neglect.[9]

4 Censorship Attacks Good Books

Censorship attacks good books, not poor books. One of the interesting characteristics of the current tensions between the schools and some parents is that the complaints involve generally very good materials. Although the term "obscene" is used quite frequently in complaints by parents about such books as are listed below, it is very doubtful if these books are, in fact, legally obscene.

No case is known to the authors of this booklet of any books selected for use in the public schools that were held by a court to be obscene. In discussions between parents and teachers, it would be wise to restrict the word "obscene" to those works that have in fact been declared "obscene" by a court. Outside a court decision, the word is meaningless; what it most often means is that the user of the term finds the questioned work objectionable or repellent.

An examination of five surveys of objections to learning materials in the schools made between 1965 and 1981 show that some 600 book titles were the objects of complaint. Of these, approximately 22 appeared most often. The 22 most frequently cited titles are the following:

1. *The Catcher in the Rye*, J. D. Salinger
2. *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck
3. *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck
4. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell
5. *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding
6. *Go Ask Alice*, Anonymous
7. *Black Like Me*, John Griffin
8. *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
9. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
10. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn
11. *Love Story*, Erich Segal
12. *Manchild in the Promised Land*, Claude Brown
13. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Kenneth Kesey
14. *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne

15. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
16. *Forever*, Judy Blume
17. *The Learning Tree*, Gordon Parks
18. *A Separate Peace*, John Knowles
19. *The Diary of a Young Girl*, Anne Frank
20. *Deliverance*, James Dickey
21. *The Good Earth*, Pearl S. Buck
22. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

This list would be regarded by most teachers or librarians as a reasonable sample of some of the best or most relevant writers of the recent past. It should be noted that the list is largely composed of American writers of the twentieth century. The conflicts between some parents and schools involve the best learning materials, not the poorest.

A similar conclusion may be made concerning the periodicals that are the objects of complaint. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Sports Illustrated* are the periodicals most often objected to, or removed. Notice that the schools do not select *Playboy* or other similar magazines.

Another illustration of this point is that the five dictionaries recently objected to in Texas are widely regarded by teachers as the best dictionaries available. (See section 6, below.)

While the use of films has met with fewer objections than other media, some films have attracted strong objections. *The Lottery*, Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, and versions of *Macbeth*, among other titles, have aroused the censors. Again, it is noteworthy that these are filmed versions of good or great works of literature. Objections to *The Birth of a Nation* are understandable, but that film's place in the history of the movies, as well as its value in presenting the point of view that led to the Jim Crow laws of the 1890s and early 1900s, give it high educational value. It is ironic that the medium which has been described as the "quintessential American art form" should encounter difficulties in the schools. As in the case of books and periodicals, the difficulties occur from the use of works of good reputation—in many cases, in fact, the best materials available in film.

Intellectual freedom in the classrooms of the nation's schools is not used for the poorest of material or for any books or films that a court has found obscene. Instead, it is being used for films and books that are among the most popular, that are translated into many foreign languages, that deal with important human concerns, and that have received serious and complimentary treatment from literary critics and other writers.

One of the great achievements of the American society is its literature. It seems likely that in the far future there will be people who will learn English just to read the books that have been written by American writers. The attractiveness of our literature to people all over the world is well demonstrated by the extent to which it is translated into other languages. The principles of literary criticism strongly suggest that our literature will take its place as a worthy and permanent part of the literature in English. Undoubtedly, the deep commitment of teachers and librarians to American literature is a continuing cause of the tension between the schools and those parents who apparently do not regard American literature of the twentieth century as worth teaching in the schools.

5 Censorship and Organizations

Prior to the mid-seventies, most textbook protesters were individual parents who became upset when they learned that their children were reading books that contained language they considered offensive or ideas they decried. For the most part, such parents acted alone by asking someone in a school to remove a book from a classroom or school library. Occasionally, a single parent would enlist the aid of other parents in denouncing a book or books. But only rarely did a group of parents form an organization whose major objective was to have specific books banned from libraries and classrooms.

In the late thirties and forties and in the early fifties, several national organizations joined forces to attack social studies textbooks deemed to be too socialistic or too soft on Communism. Thus, the Rugg series began disappearing from classrooms before World War II, and the Magruder series came under attack immediately after the war. But there seemed to be no concerted effort on the part of national organizations systematically to review all textbooks and library books and to demand the removal of those considered to be offensive. In the seventies the situation changed drastically.

Today, hundreds of textbook protesting organizations across the nation have joined forces to denounce the public schools in general and specific books in particular. Not all of the organizations have set their sights on the same targets, but many of them agree that the major target in the early eighties is the preaching of the "religion of secular humanism" in the public schools. The organizations refer to the so-called religion as "secular humanism," "humanism," "atheistic humanism," or "evil atheistic secular humanism." Regardless of the label, dozens of the textbook protesters agree on the following definition of humanism which has been distributed to concerned parents throughout the nation:

> Humanism is a recognized religion that believes man is God and rejects biblical standards of living.
>
> This religion has replaced Christianity and the Bible in public schools and the Humanist values are being forced upon our children.

19

> Parents are being told that schools are not in the business of teaching religion and values. This is not true.
>
> Humanism is being taught through the arm of the Behavioral Sciences, i.e., Values Clarification, Behavior Modification, Reality Therapy, Transactional Analysis, etc. These techniques are designed to mentally 1. unfreeze, 2. change, and then 3. refreeze the students' values into those of the Humanist philosophy.
>
> This philosophy teaches there are no absolutes. Everything is relative. There is no God; no supreme authority. Students are to realize there are many shades of gray and must move away from black-white thinking. There are many alternatives from which to choose. Every authority and belief is brought into question through exercises designed to change values.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The student is constantly programmed for the need of survival because no deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Survival games and films such as Toffler's *Future Shock* are vivid illustrations.
>
> Humanism teaches that survival is dependent upon the building of a world community with an international authority and the ceasing of national sovereignty. . . .
>
> The teaching of Humanism in public schools not only defies Christian values and authority of parents, but borders on treason and violates the U.S. Constitution by teaching a religion.[10]

It follows, then, that one of the targets of many of the organizations protesting "the religion of humanism" is the humanities. Other prominent targets are sex education, drug education, citizenship courses that are supposedly designed to lead students to socialism and communism, evolution, revisionist histories, books that do not champion the work ethic, books that do not promote the family unit as the basis of American life, books that do not promote patriotism, books that promote role playing, the inquiry method of teaching, and sensitivity training.

Targets of particular interest to teachers of English include the following: any attempt at values clarification through the study of literature; ethnic studies; black literature; black dialect; and nonstandard English uttered by a character in a novel, short story, or play; literature written by homosexuals; dirty words; violence in literature; mythology; books and stories that contain negative statements about parents or persons in authority; science fiction; books with suggestive titles (such as *The Rape of the Lock*); concrete poetry; and world literature in translation.

One prominent critic of the public schools has declared that all textbooks are nothing more nor less than "Soviet propaganda." In

his writing and in his sermons he has urged America to "rise up in arms and throw out every textbook" that denies children their 200 year-old American heritage. He has accused teachers of denying children their heritage through their selection of textbooks.

Every individual and every organization protesting textbooks believes that they are doing the correct thing. Few—if any—would admit that they are denying the student's right to learn and the teacher's right to teach by attempting to remove ideas or books from the schools. Thus, those organizations that are concerned with sexist or racist statements in books are offended when they are called censors—since they believe what they are doing is good for children. But all textbook protesters share that belief. What needs to be done, then, is to persuade all textbook protesters that the removal of books from schools and libraries is not the way to improve society. Rather, every attempt should be made to help students detect sexist, racist, and unpatriotic statements, for example, and to deal with them independently and appropriately.

6 Why Censorship Is Increasing

Here are some of the explanations scholars have offered for the increasing number of incidents of attempts at censorship of school materials during the latter part of the seventies:

1. People tend to examine the schools critically during times of economic, political, and moral tension. The critics of the schools find it easy to blame the schools for all—or a good part—of the problems of society.
2. Some parents have responded to the student protest movement of the sixties by decrying the "progressive and permissive" educational system that spawned it. Such parents want to remove literature that reflects any of the ideas espoused by the student protesters.
3. Desegregation has led to some parents being upset with almost anything the schools do.
4. The removal of prayer from the schools has disturbed thousands of Americans.
5. The attention of the media to the declining SAT scores has caused many parents to call for a return to the basics and the removal of any courses, ideas, or literature they disagree with.
6. The inclusion in the curriculum of courses on values clarification, sex education, and drug education has disturbed many parents.
7. Critics of education who believe that the schools are teaching the religion of secular humanism point to evolution, situation ethics, values clarification, and sex education as proof that the schools are preaching a religion.
8. The emergence of black literature and the literature of various ethnic groups has upset some parents who think that the literature taught in the schools must be the same literature they studied two or three decades ago.

9. Contemporary authors of adolescent novels have ignored the taboos of the forties and fifties and have begun writing books about the problems of teenagers and have been using language that some parents do not believe should be included in books.
10. Adults who had unpleasant experiences while they were in school sometimes strike back at the schools by protesting books, courses, and teaching methods.
11. Parents sometimes become frustrated when they do not recognize the subject matter their children are studying and cannot help them with homework. For example, some parents resent the "new math" and the "new English."
12. Teachers have not always chosen materials wisely and well, and they have sometimes used methods that have caused parental concern.
13. Teachers and administrators have not always welcomed parental complaints. The founder of one large protest organization indicated that one of the reasons she founded the organization was that teachers and administrators would not otherwise pay attention to her. She has now become very successful at being heard and at causing teachers and administrators to spend many hours responding to a variety of complaints that might not have been made, had they listened to her in the first place.
14. Local and national organizations of concerned citizens have been formed to protest school books and/or to establish private schools if the members feel there is little hope for the public schools. The vocal organizations have given courage to many people who would have otherwise remained silent but who now protest books and materials. The organizations have also provided parents with reviews of books so that the parents can attempt to protest a specific work without having to read it. All the parents have to do is cite the objections provided by the organizations.

Probably the most important and influential organization is Educational Research Analysts, P.O. Box 7518, Longview, TX 75602, which provides concerned citizens with reviews of virtually all textbooks published in America.[11] Founded by Norma and Mel Gabler, Educational Research Analysts also provides its followers with strategies for approaching certain school officials about objectionable books and with materials published by other

protesting organizations. Any person who writes to the Gablers for reviews receives these two statements, which seem to be their creed:

> Until textbooks are changed, there is no possibility that crime, violence, VD, and abortion rates will do anything but continue to climb.
>
> Textbooks mold nations because textbooks largely determine how a nation votes, what it becomes, and where it goes.

The Gablers prepare extensive bills of particulars in which they object to specific words or passages in books that have been submitted for adoption in Texas. They are highly successful with their protests. For example, in 1978 their bill of particulars led the Texas textbook adoption commission to reject eighteen of the twenty-eight series of books submitted for adoption. Some publishers freely admit that they fear the Gabler influence, since books that do not succeed in being adopted in Texas have little chance elsewhere. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that some editors sit with copies of the Gablers' bills of particulars in front of them so that they will know what to edit out of textbooks.

The Gablers' materials are known and distributed by most of the other textbook protesting organizations. And the Gablers distribute the objections of other organizations to their clients.

Here are only a few of the more than three hundred organizations that protest textbooks in the United States:

> The Heritage Foundation, 513 C St. N.E., Washington, DC 20002 founded by Joseph B. Coors; the Foundation has published one monograph on secular humanism and one on the need for family choice in the selection of schools. Both monographs are available from a score of organizations critical of the schools. The foundation also publishes *Education Update*, which contains guidelines for protesting textbooks, among other articles published in the newsletter.
>
> The National Congress for Educational Excellence, which has its headquarters in Dallas, Texas. The NCEE publishes *The School Bell*, a newspaper that carries a number of articles on secular humanism. To help unsuspecting parents recognize secular humanists, *The School Bell* published a list of nearly three hundred words that parents should look for in textbooks, or listen for when teachers talk, to determine whether or not the books were written by secular humanists

and the teachers are secular humanists. The list contains these words and phrases:

> academic freedom, anthropology, attitude, awareness, behavior modification, body language, brainstorming, child development, communicating, coping, creative writing, and democracy.

Parents of Minnesota, Inc., P. O. Box 118, Minneapolis, MN 55071. This organization has attacked a large number of school systems in the Twin Cities area, charging them with teaching secular humanism. The organization gives concerned parents a set of guidelines for combatting the religion of secular humanism. Here are two of those guidelines:

> Drug Education is oriented to teach students how to use drugs in a responsible manner. It was never designed as a preventative. Drug Education usually enhances the desire to try drugs. Educators go on the same premise here as they do for sex education, i.e., "They are going to do it anyhow, so let's show them how." Students are taught the pleasures of drugs, how to administer them, and how much they can take before it will harm or make them addicted. Since Drug Education began, the percentage of young drug users has risen to epidemic proportions!
>
> DO NOT BE MISLED when you hear that your child is having a course on citizenship. These are not citizenship classes as we know them to be. The new courses are designed to transfer the loyalties of the child from CAPITALISM (Free Enterprise) to SOCIALISM. Socialism (according to Marxist theory) is a state of society in transition between CAPITALISM and COMMUNISM.

Young Parents Alert, P.O. Box 15, Lake Elmo, MN 55042. Within the last year, this group has joined with Parents of Minnesota and other groups to sponsor two statewide meetings for parents who want to start their own schools.

The Texas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 3721 Austin Avenue, Waco, TX 76710. By staging a concerted attack on the so-called dirty words in dictionaries, the Texas Daughters persuaded the Commissioner of Education in Texas to place these five dictionaries on the no-purchase list in 1976: *American Heritage, Doubleday, Random House, Webster's Seventh Collegiate,* and *Webster's New World.* Among the words protested were "across-the-board" and "bed." The chairperson of the Texas Daughters' reviewing committee objected to "across-the-board" because she said it is a betting term and betting on horse racing is

illegal in Texas. She objected to "bed" because one definition for the verb transitive is "to have sexual intercourse with." (That definition comes to us from the Song of Solomon.)

Moral Majority, 499 S. Capitol St., Suite 101, Washington, DC 20003. Founded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA, this organization has chapters in many states and has been active in objecting to books used both in the public libraries and in the public schools.

Guardians of Education for Maine (GEM), P.O. Box 759, Camden, ME 04843

Let's Improve Today's Education (LITE), 9340 W. Peoria Avenue, Peoria, AZ 85345

Parents Who Care, 3807 Taylor Street, Chevy Chase, MD 20015

Citizens United for Responsible Education (CURE), P.O. Box 93, Flourtown, PA 19031

Citizens United for Responsible Education (CURE), P.O. Box 9864, Chevy Chase, MD 20015

The Network of Patriotic Letter Writers, Box 2003D, Pasadena, CA 91105

Pro-Family Forum, P.O. Box 14701, Fort Worth, TX 76117

Christian Family Renewal, Box 73, Clovis, CA 93613

Some organizations like the ones listed above are rather short-lived; they come into existence to protest a particular book or curricular item, and then may go out of existence fairly soon. Some of the organizations listed above have, however, had fairly long periods of existence.

7 Rights of Teachers in Schools

Do elementary and secondary school teachers have the right to teach what they think they should in their classrooms? Do they enjoy academic freedom to the same degree as college instructors? Are elementary and secondary school teachers protected, in their classrooms, by the constitutional guarantees of the First Amendment? Can a book, film, or teaching method be barred from a classroom or can a book be removed from a school library simply because it offends the sensibilities of some members of the community? Do students have the rights to read and to learn?

The answers to those questions are not as clear as most teachers—and critics of the schools—would like them to be. However, the federal courts have provided some answers that need to be considered by all teachers.

In the landmark case of *Tinker* v. *Des Moines Independent Community School District*,[12] The Supreme Court made this frequently quoted statement: "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the school house gate." On the other hand, a lower court decided, in the case of *Mailloux* v. *Kiley*,[13] that the faculty of a secondary school

> does not have the independent traditions, the broad discretion as to teaching methods, nor usually the intellectual qualifications, of university professors. Among secondary school teachers there are often many persons with little experience. Some teachers and most students have limited intellectual and emotional maturity.

In that case, the court also noted:

> Most parents, students, school boards, and members of the community usually expect the secondary school to concentrate on transmitting basic information, teaching 'the best that is known and thought in the world,' training by established techniques, and, to some extent, indoctrinating in the *mores* of the surrounding society.[14]

That decision seems to be one of the favorites of the textbook

protesters who cite legal decisions. But they also need to consider the case of *Sterzing* v. *Fort Bend Independent School District*[15] in which the court held that

> the freedom of speech of a teacher and a citizen of the United States must not be so lightly regarded that he stands in jeopardy of dismissal for raising controversial issues in an eager but disciplined classroom.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held, in *Kingsville Independent School District* v. *Cooper*,[16] that classroom discussion is protected by the First Amendment.

But classroom discussion must be related directly to the subject matter of the class. The courts have decided that a teacher could not discuss sex in an all-male speech class,[17] discuss politics in an economics class,[18] discuss disapproval of ROTC in an algebra class.[19] The courts have also decided that teachers have no constitutional rights to use unorthodox teaching methods.[20]

In *Keefe* v. *Geanakos*,[21] the First Circuit Court of Appeals decided that a school board could not dismiss a teacher who had assigned a class to read a magazine article that contained a word the school board found to be offensive. The teacher refused to refrain from discussing the article and the word, but he had given the students the right to choose an alternate assignment if they found the discussion to be offensive. In upholding the teacher, the First Circuit Court included in its opinion this statement from the Supreme Court decision of *Wieman* v. *Updegraff*[22]:

> Such unwarranted inhibition upon the free spirit of teachers affects not only those who . . . are immediately before the court. It has an unmistakable tendency to chill that free play of the spirit which all teachers ought especially to cultivate and practice.

In *Bob Cary, et al.* v. *Board of Education of the Adams-Arapahoe School District*,[23] a federal judge made this comment about the need for academic freedom among secondary school teachers:

> To restrict the opportunity for involvement in an open forum for the free exchange of ideas would not only foster an unacceptable elitism, it would also fail to complete the development of those not going on to college, contrary to our constitutional commitment to equal opportunity. Effective citizenship in a participatory democracy must not be dependent upon advancement toward college degrees. Consequently, it would be inappropriate to conclude that academic freedom is required only in the colleges and universities.

When a high school teacher was dismissed for refusing to comply with her superior's order that she stop teaching Kurt Vonnegut's "Welcome to the Monkey House," a district court upheld the teacher's right to teach the story and denied the school board the right to dismiss her. The court found that the story was appropriate for high school juniors and that it was not obscene.[24]

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals decided that a school board could not remove Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* from a school library. The court observed:

> A library is a storehouse of knowledge. When created for a public school, it is an important privilege created by the state for the benefit of students in the school. That privilege is not subject to being withdrawn by succeeding school boards whose members might desire to 'winnow' the library for books the contents of which occasioned their displeasure or disapproval.[25]

The Sixth Circuit Court also observed:

> The court must conclude that the board removed the books because it found them objectionable in content and because it felt it had the power, unfettered by the First Amendment, to censor the school library for subject matter that the board members found distasteful. . . . A public school library is a valuable adjunct to classroom discussion. If a teacher considered Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* to be an important American novel, no one would dispute that the First Amendment's protection of academic freedom would protect both his right to say so in class and his student's right to hear him and to find and read the book. Obviously, the student's success in this last endeavor would be greatly hindered by the fact that the book had been removed from the school library. The removal of books from a school library is a much more serious burden upon freedom of classroom discussion than the action found unconstitutional in *Tinker* v. *Des Moines*. . . . This burden is not minimized by the availability of the disputed book in sources outside the school.[26]

Other cases have upheld the student's right of access to information in a school library. One district court judge denied a school board the right to remove a book that it considered to be offensive because it contained a poem in which street language is used.[27] Another district court judge ordered a school to return *Ms.* magazine to the school library's shelves, noting that a school board could not remove the magazine simply because it offended a board member's political, religious, and moral sensibilities.[28]

But the textbook protesters usually ignore such court decisions and go to the *President's Council*[29] decision to argue that a school board has the right to remove offensive books. In that case, a school board placed Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* on restricted shelves in junior high school libraries because of its language. The Supreme Court upheld the appellate court decision by refusing to hear the case. Thus *President's Council* has become an effective precedent for those who would remove books from school libraries.

Another precedent-setting case might be *Pico, et al.*, v. *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District.*[30] In *Pico*, a school board removed eleven books from school libraries after three of its board members attended a meeting of a textbook protesting group and found the eleven books on a list of objectionable books. Students sued the school board on the grounds that they had the right to know. However, the district court noted that a school board has the right to remove books from a school library at any time for any reason whatsoever. The decision was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, which, in June 1982, sent the case back to a federal trial court "to see if the school board members had 'constitutionally valid concerns' that justified their removal of the books" (Associated Press, 25 June 1982). The ruling affirmed the right of students to hold school boards accountable for their actions.

A review of all cases involving the First Amendment rights of teachers and students would indicate that the majority of decisions uphold the students' rights to read and to learn and the teacher's right to teach. However, those rights are subject either to expansion or limitation, depending on future court decisions and the interpretation of present decisions.

8 If Good Books Elevate, Do Bad Books Degrade?

An argument that is sometimes used to defend censorship is that if good literature can be expected to be a morally uplifting force, then bad literature must be a morally degrading force. The argument is sometimes supported by an explicit or implicit metaphor that compares good literature to food and compares bad literature to poison. This argument has little scholarly or scientific evidence to support it. While it appears on the surface to be a matter of common sense, it is well established that so-called common sense conclusions about reality often turn out on examination not to be supported by scientific evidence. This argument is on the whole a gross over-simplification of a very complex matter.

One of the first problems with this argument is the difficulty of distinguishing between good literature and bad literature. It is quite ironic in this connection that, insofar as the schools are concerned, it appears the forces that act toward limiting or censoring school materials are most likely to object to the books that in all probability most English teachers would list among the best of books. Review the list in section 4 of the books that have appeared most often on five studies of censorship made between 1965 and 1981. These books would probably be regarded as good books by English teachers; they are regarded as bad books by would-be censors.

If there is no social agreement as to what books are bad and what books are good, how can we test the proposition that bad books cause bad behavior?

The metaphor that good books are like food and bad books are like poison is clearly a mistaken comparison. In the first place, metaphors are not logical demonstrations of truth. Metaphors are suggestive, illustrative, but not grounds for establishing the truth of a proposition. In the second place, this particular metaphor clearly suggests similarities that do not exist. Reading and eating are not fundamentally comparable activities.

Eating is an activity that enables the energies of a foreign substance to influence the body in a variety of ways, depending

on the nature of the substance that is put into the body. The most distinctly human characteristics—freedom of choice and rationality—are called into play only prior to the act of ingesting something. A person may decide to eat a nourishing substance, or a destructive substance, but after the decision is made and carried out, the results of the eating are out of the control of the eater. Good food may be nourishing, bad food may be poison, but the human mind plays no role in the actual working out in the body of the effect of the substances that were ingested.

Reading is quite different. The reader decides during every moment of the reading activity whether to continue reading, how to interpret what is read, how to respond to what is read, and what action, if any, to take, with regard to what is read. In short, with regard to reading, the reader's most human characteristics—freedom of choice and rationality—are constantly in play. In fact, unless these activities continue, no reading occurs. Reading is energized by the human mind, not by the print, and the results of the reading are the result of an activity that we call rational, even though we might differ with one another concerning the meaning or results of any particular act of reading.

There is, therefore, no valid comparison between eating and reading. They are fundamentally different kinds of activities, and the frequently used metaphor that compares them is simply wrong, attractive as it may seem.

The belief that reading automatically or predictably causes bad actions in the way that poison causes illness or death has little scientific evidence to support it. One of the most complete examinations of juvenile delinquency was carried out by the Gluecks.[31] This study matched 500 boys who were adjudged delinquent by the courts with 500 boys who were not found to be delinquent. The pairs were matched in a number of ways, including ethnic background, socioeconomic status, and age. They were followed for several years; exhaustive comparisons were made of the boys' home life, school work, and personalities. There is no evidence in this study that bad books played any role in this sample of 500 delinquent boys. In fact, they read little, and poorly, and their homes were observed to contain few books.

The question "Can reading affect delinquency?" was discussed by William C. Kvaraceus in an article by that title. His essay points out how complicated this question is: "The primitive habit of blaming books—classics or comics—for delinquency or crime represents a simple-minded approach to a many-sided and complex phenomenon."[32] His summary of the evidence relevant to his

question offers little support for the equation that good books produce good behavior and bad books produce bad behavior.

Though English teachers may not like the conclusion, it may also be true that we have exaggerated the effects of good books. Generations of the western world have claimed to read the Bible, but only slowly have we eliminated slavery, torture in the jails, or the subordination of women to secondary status. The western world powers for all their acclaim of the Bible remain very warlike agencies in the contemporary world.

Milton was correct in saying in the *Areopagitica* that "wise men will make better use of an idle pamphlet than a fool will do of sacred scriptures." The twentieth-century worshippers who pass around poisonous snakes in church, because the New Testament asserts that those who trust in the Lord may handle serpents unafraid, are one of many illustrations that might be made of Milton's point. The literature of psychopathology gives further illustrations, such as the several cases of misguided young men who mutilate or castrate themselves because of misreading passages in the Bible.

We should therefore regard learning resource materials—books, magazines, films, works of art—as only learning resource materials, not determiners of human conduct or belief. As the differences of interpretation of the Bible illustrate, the attitudes brought to the book or film are as important as the book or film itself. The use of the book, the context in which it is read, the instructional goals for which the book was chosen—these have great influence on the reader's response, though ultimately the reader's own individuality may be the single most important factor in determining what response occurs. Kvaraceus remarked that "reading tends to reinforce what has already been learned or experienced, frequently as far back as the childhood years."[33] A comprehensive summary of research on the effect of reading on the reader may be found in a discussion by Richard Beach in *Dealing with Censorship.*[34]

Literature plays a complex role in life. The responses of individual readers are extremely various. Even if good literature is uplifting, it is rather doubtful that bad literature must, as a corollary, be morally degrading or conducive to anti-social behavior.

9 Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

This report has described several causes for tension between parents and the schools. It is doubtful if these tensions will be removed in the near future, or if they could be resolved by an easy acceptance by either party of the claims made by the other party.

Do the Best Professional Job Possible

If, for instance, the complaining parents were able to remove permanently from the schools all the ideas mentioned earlier in this report as targets of the censors, it is extremely doubtful if those ideas would disappear from our society. The sexual promiscuity that the authors of this report, along with many other members of this society, find repellent is not likely to disappear if such books as *Love Story* or *Forever* were removed from the school libraries. Such books are not the cause of sexual promiscuity; forces outside the school cause social change, not the forces within the school. In all probability, the development of the automobile, World War I, and the development of effective contraceptives have more to do with changing sex practices than anything that has happened in the schools.

Therefore, we may expect to live for some time with the tensions described throughout this report. In the light of that probability, it seems likely that teachers ought to continue to do the best job possible, while at the same time attempting to maintain contact with parental groups, or individual parents, in order to explain the purposes of the various units in the curriculum and the function of the learning materials chosen to support each curriculum unit.

Teachers and librarians should resist the temptation to become censors themselves. The 1977 NCTE study of censorship showed that the quantity, *not* the quality, of books in the library is related to the frequency of censorship. Eliminating apparently controversial books will *not* reduce the frequency of censorship.[35]

The best interest of the schools and the nation will not be served by returning to the curriculum and materials used in the last century, or earlier in this century. Those persons who advocate McGuffey's readers must not have read them or at least must have no comprehension of the difficulty of teaching such material to the children who live in the age of television, trips to the moon, and the possibility of atomic warfare.

Establish a Materials Selection Policy

Teachers and librarians should make every effort to obtain a materials selection policy. The policy should be developed by a representative committee including members of the school board, the administration and teaching staff, representatives of the student body, and of an appropriate parental group. Ideally, the procedures that are established by this policy should also involve representatives from all the constituencies listed above.

After the policy and procedures are adopted, it is important to see that they are, in fact, carried out. Some schools have had such policies but never used them. In time of crisis, the policy was not as useful as it would have been if it had been in regular use.

Suggested Components for
a Materials Selection Policy[36]

Preliminary Consideration:

The committee drafting the Instructional Materials Selection Policy should *consider* including members of the following groups, in order to enlist wide support for the policy: students, teachers, media specialists, parents, para-professionals, building administrators, system administrators, Regional Educational Materials Center staff (REMC).

A decision should be made at the outset as to whether the policy will cover *all* materials or only those purchased by and housed in the media center.

A local level statement of Instructional Materials Selection Policy should include (not necessarily in the following order):

1. A statement of the philosophy of materials selection such as is given in the Library Bill of Rights.
2. A statement that the governing body of the district is legally responsible for the selection of instructional materials.
3. A statement detailing the delegation of this responsibility to professional personnel.

4. Criteria for instructional materials selection in the school or district.
5. Procedures for implementing selection criteria.
6. A routine procedure for challenged materials:
   a. A complaint committee and its make-up
   b. Statement that the procedure is applicable to *all* individuals, including school personnel *and* board members
   c. Statement of how challenged materials will be handled during the period of reconsideration
   d. Statement of whether or not materials will be put through the entire reconsideration process more than once within a specified time period
7. Definitions of critical terms used in the selection policy, e.g., "selection," "instructional materials," "literary merit," etc.

Include Academic Freedom in the Bargaining Contract

Schools that engage in collective bargaining should try to include a clause in the contract protecting academic freedom and insuring that the officially approved policies and procedures will be followed. Unions are only beginning to be aware of this problem, but it ought to be on the agenda of union meetings. Professional staff members of the unions should establish model clauses.

Provide Alternative Assignments

Definitions of intellectual freedom should make clear that the student has a right to an alternate assignment when learning materials are found offensive to the student. However, the right *not* to read an offensive book does not mean the right to prevent other people from reading that book.

Develop Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

Schools should develop a procedure for use when a citizen challenges a learning resource item. Ideally, the complaining citizen should be directed first to the teacher or librarian who ordered or who is using the item. The complaint form should be organized on the assumption that the school will attempt to direct a complainant to the working staff member for an explanation. (Readers

are encouraged to reproduce the form, Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work, provided at the end of this section.)

Schools should include a provision in the procedures that requires the administrator to direct the complainant to the teacher or librarian before taking other action. There is considerable evidence that many parents may come to understand why the teacher has chosen a book or film, and if they have a chance to meet, will come to see that the teacher is a dedicated human being. Nyla Ahren's study of NCTE members showed that older teachers have fewer censorship problems than younger ones, in all probability because they have become better known in their communities. To find sympathetic response from parents, the teacher must greet the complainants with friendly understanding and an awareness of the parents' concern for their children. A friendly and understanding attitude toward parents is most likely to win a friendly response to the teacher's explanations.

The master contract between teachers and school board should require that agencies in the school system—school members, administrators, and complaining parents—follow the procedures for dealing with a citizen's complaint. The purpose of the complaint procedure should not be to sidetrack or distract the complaining parent.

That school districts do take complaints seriously is shown by much evidence. A study by Agnes Stahlschmidt showed that 122 formal complaints made to the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, school district in the ten year period between 1971 and 1981 resulted in 20 decisions that modified the school's use of various books.[37] At Montello, Wisconsin, in 1981, formal or informal complaints resulted in decisions that modified the use of two books. One was withdrawn from the school library—*Hard Feelings*; another book was put on a reserve shelf, subject to use by parental permission only. A recent objection to *The Learning Tree*, filed by three citizens of the Mead, Washington, school district was given much attention by committee and staff members who devoted a good many hours to considering this complaint. It is evident that schools do take complaints by citizens, parents or not, quite seriously.

The complaint procedure should have as its primary purpose bringing the complaining parent together with the teacher, in an effort to achieve a mutual understanding of the problems involved. Mutual understanding may not always be achieved but the effort to do so should be the primary function of the complaint procedure.

Develop Rationales for Curricular Items

Schools should develop a rationale for curricular items and for the materials used in support of the various curricular units. It is impossible to predict which books or films may be objected to, so one must plan to explain the major items in a given curriculum. This may seem a time consuming process, but it is almost essential in protecting against censorship. When there was a complaint about *To Kill a Mockingbird* in Omaha, Nebraska, it was pointed out that the book was chosen to support a carefully planned eighth grade unit on the hero in American life. That explanation was found satisfactory to most complainants, and the protest ceased.

Teachers should prepare rationales for audio-visual materials, such as the filmed version of *Romeo and Juliet.* Schools that use the filmed version of *The Lottery* may obtain the filmed rationale prepared by James Durbin, in the EBE Humanities Program Film number 47758. If a form is sent home to students requiring parental permission for reading a controversial book, consideration should be given to including the rationale that has been prepared for that book with the parental permission form.

Ken Donelson has suggested that rationales should be easy to read and maintain a tone of respect for the audience. Specifically, he suggests eight questions that each rationale should address:

1. For what classes is this book especially appropriate?
2. To what particular objectives, literary or psychological or pedagogical, does this book lend itself?
3. In what ways will the book be used to meet those objectives?
4. What problems of style, tone, or theme or possible grounds for censorship exist in the book?
5. How does the teacher plan to meet those problems?
6. Assuming that the objectives are met, how would students be different because of their reading of this book?
7. What are some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book?
8. What reputable sources have recommended this book? What have critics said of it?[38]

Teachers ought not to use some item chosen at the last minute. Preparing rationales and planning ahead may eliminate some spontaneity, but it is likely that, on the whole, better instruction may result.

Consult the article by Diane Shugert in *Dealing with Censorship* for model rationales and for a more complete discussion of writing rationales.

Seek Assistance from Professional Organizations

If a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the teacher or librarian, assistance should be sought from professional organizations such as NCTE, or from the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611. Social Studies teachers may apply to the National Council for the Social Studies, Legal Defense Fund, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, DC 20036. Other helpful groups include the various unions that teachers belong to, such as NEA and AFT. The National Education Association, Teachers' Rights, may be addressed at 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, DC 20036. The American Federation of Teachers may be addressed at 11 Dupont Circle, N. W., Washington, DC 20036. College teachers may apply to the American Association of University Professors, One Dupont Circle, N. W., Washington, DC 20036. The American Civil Liberties Union and its various state affiliates are also helpful. National headquarters of ACLU is 22 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016. Many of these groups have state affiliates that may be quite accessible in time of need. State addresses may be available either from national headquarters of the various groups, or from the reference room of local libraries. Other helpful sources: Association of American Publishers, One Park Ave., New York, NY 10016; Media Coalition, Inc., 425 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022; National Ad Hoc Committee Against Censorship, 22 E. 40th St., New York, NY 10016.

Much useful material may be found in the bibliography below of publications by a variety of organizations; *The Students' Right to Read*, which is a short and useful complement to this booklet, may be obtained from NCTE.

Form Coalitions with Other Professional and Community Groups

Professional organizations should work together for the preservation of intellectual freedom in the schools. Information about

several coalitions which have been formed, both nationally and in various states, may be obtained from NCTE or from the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association. Such groups perform useful functions. They can monitor legislation and send representatives to federal or state legislatures to express judgments concerning the effect of various legislative proposals on the schools or on intellectual freedom. Such testimony has been quite effective. A number of other important activities can be carried out by such coalitions. They can offer mutual support in time of censorship pressure. They can plan and carry out conferences of interested persons to educate the public concerning the problems of censorship. Every effort should be made to bring together the various professional and community groups concerned with intellectual freedom; their joint action is much more effective than the action of English teachers only.

Teachers and librarians have been averse to publicity, but it is likely that effective publicity can be very helpful. Most newspapers and other media agencies are very concerned with intellectual freedom and are often very supportive. Often publicity has assisted teachers in winning a favorable public response and has ended threats to intellectual freedom. Teachers and librarians should make every effort to become skillful proponents of the need for intellectual freedom in the schools.

Be Willing to Sue, But Only as a Last Resort

If every resort fails, teachers and teacher-related groups should be prepared to use the power of the law to protect the right of the student to learn. Lawsuits are expensive, tedious, and unpredictable. If at all possible, they should be avoided. But if at last all other measures fail, then the agencies that recommend the best methods for teachers and that publish lists of the best books and films to use with those methods should be prepared to give teachers legal defense for their use of those materials.

Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work

Paperback _____
Author _____ Hardcover _____
Title _____
Publisher (If known) _____
Request initiated by _____
Telephone _____ Address _____
City _____ Zip Code _____

Complainant represents
_____Himself/Herself
_____(Name organization) _____
_____(Identify other group) _____

1. Have you been able to discuss this work with the teacher or librarian who ordered it or who used it?
   _____Yes _____No
2. What do you understand to be the general purpose for using this work?
   a. Provide support for a unit in the curriculum?
      _____Yes _____No
   b. Provide a learning experience for the reader in one kind of literature?
      _____Yes _____No
   c. Other _____
      _____
3. Did the general purpose for the use of the work, as described by the teacher or librarian, seem a suitable one to you?
   _____Yes _____No
   If not, please explain. _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
4. What seems, to you, to be the general purpose of the author in this book? _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. In what ways do you think a work of this nature is not suitable for the use the teacher or librarian wishes to carry out?_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Have you been able to learn what is the students' response to this work?
_____Yes _____No

7. What response did the students make? _____
_____
_____
_____

8. Have you been able to learn from your school library what book reviewers or other students of literature have written about this work?
_____Yes _____No

9. Do you have negative reviews of the book?
_____Yes _____No

10. Would you like the teacher or librarian to give you a written summary of what book reviewers and other students have written about this book or film?
_____Yes _____No

11. What would you like your library/school to do about this work?
_____Do not assign/lend it to my child.
_____Return it to the staff selection committee/department for re-evaluation.
_____Other—Please explain _____
_____
_____

12. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated? _____
_____
_____

Signature _____

Date _____

Notes

1. Jim Reynolds in "Policies Help Protect Academic Freedom," *Montana Schools* 24 (December 1980–January 1981): 2.

2. Learned Hand, United States v. Kennerly, 209 Fed. 119 (S.D. N.Y. 1913), as cited in *Censorship Landmarks* by Edward De Grazia (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1969), p. 58.

3. John Woolsey, United States v. One Book Called *Ulysses*, 5 F. Supp. 182 (S.D. N.Y. 1933), as cited in *Censorship Landmarks* by Edward De Grazia (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1969), pp. 94–96.

4. Augustus N. Hand, United States v. One Book Entitled *Ulysses*, 72 F. (2d) 705 (2d Cir. 1933), aff'd 5 F. Supp. 182 (S.D. N.Y. 1933), as cited in *Censorship Landmarks* by Edward De Grazia (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1969), pp. 96–101.

5. Curtis Bok, Commonwealth v. Gordon, 66 Pa. D.&C. 101 (1949), as cited in *Suppressed Books* by Alec Craig (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 141–142.

6. Warren E. Burger, "Excerpts from Pornography Opinions: Miller v. California," *New York Times*, 22 June 1973, p. 42.

7. James E. Davis, ed., *Dealing with Censorship* (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), pp. 24–27.

8. Edwin Castagna, "Censorship, Intellectual Freedom, and Libraries," in *Advances in Librarianship*, vol. 2 (New York: Seminar Press, 1971), p. 216.

9. Julia T. Bradley, "Censoring the School Library: Do Students Have the Right to Read?" *Connecticut Law Review* 10 (Spring 1978): 770.

10. *New York Times*, 11 December 1980, p. A28.

11. Edward B. Jenkinson, *Censors in the Classroom* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), pp. 108–118.

12. Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).

13. Mailloux v. Kiley, 436 F. 2d 565 (1st Cir.), *after dismissal*, 323 F. Supp. 1387 (D. Mass.), aff'd 448 F. 2d 1242 (1st Cir. 1971) (per curiam).

14. Mailloux v. Kiley, 323 F. Supp. 1392.

15. Sterzing v. Fort Bend Independent School District, 376 F. Supp. 657 (1972).

16. Kingsville Independent School District v. Cooper, 611-Fed. Rptr., Second Series 1109 (Kingsville, Texas, 1980).

17. State ex rel. Wailewski v. Board of School Directors, 14 Was. 2d 243, 111 N.W. 2d 193 (1961).

18. Ahern v. Board of Education, 327 Supp. 1391 (D. Neb. 1971) aff'd 456 F. 2d 399 (8th Cir. 1972).

19. Birdwell v. Hazel School District, 352 F. Supp. 613 (E.D. Mo. 1972), aff'd 491 F. 2d 490 (8th Cir. 1974).

20. Adams v. Campbell County School District, 511 F. 2d 1242 (10th Cir. 1975).

21. Keefe v. Geanakos, 418 F. 2d 359 (1st Cir. 1969).

22. Wieman v. Updegraff, 344 U.S. 183.

23. Bob Cary et al. v. Board of Education of the Adams-Arapahoe School District 28-J, Aurora, Colorado, 427 F. Supp. 945, 952 (D. Colo. 1977).

24. Parducci v. Rutland, 316 F. Supp. 352 (M.D. Ala. 1970).

25. Minarcini v. Strongsville City School District, 384 F. Supp. 698, aff'd 541 F. 2d 577 (6th Cir. 1976).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 581.

27. Right to Read Defense Committee of Chelsea, et al. v. School Committee of the City of Chelsea, et al. (Notes taken from mimeographed copy of Judge Tauro's decision, p. 8.)

28. Salvail, et al. v. Nashua Board of Education, et al. (Notes taken from mimeographed copy of the judge's decision.)

29. President's Council, District 25 v. Community School Board No. 25, 457 F. 2d 292 (2d Cir. 1972).

30. Pico, et al. v. Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District. (Notes taken from mimeographed copy of the judge's opinion.)

31. Eleanor Glueck, and Sheldon Glueck, *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

32. William C. Kvaraceus, "Can Reading Affect Delinquency?," *ALA Bulletin* 59, no. 6, (June 1965): 516.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 521.

34. Davis, *Dealing with Censorship*, pp. 131–159.

35. Davis, *Dealing with Censorship*, p. 19.

36. From *Selection Policies: A Guide to Updating and Writing.* Michigan Association for Media in Education, 1977. 401 South Fourth Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Used by permission.

37. Agnes D. Stahlschmidt, "The Iowa Plan Revisited: Ten Years Later," a presentation at the 71st Annual Convention, NCTE, Boston, Massachusetts, November 20–25, 1981.

38. In "Policies Help Protect Academic Freedom," p. 3.

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(For a more extensive bibliography, see *Dealing with Censorship*, pp. 222-225)